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A. FLANAGAN CO., CHICAGO

HOW LITTLE CEDRIC BECAME A KNIGHT

BY
ELIZABETH HARRISON



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HOW LITTLE CEDRIC BECAME A KNIGHT

BY ELIZABETH HARRISON

PART I

A long time ago there lived a little boy whose name was Cedric (pronounced ked'rick). At the foot of a high hill, on the top of which stood a grand old castle, was the stone hut in which he lived. The little boy had many a time watched the strong iron gate rise slowly from the ground, as out of the courtyard of the castle would ride Sir Rollin Dubois and his faithful soldiers.

There were sometimes two or three visiting knights and their followers, and they were a gay sight as the sun shone on their glittering armor of steel, and glanced from their bright helmets. They looked so strong and resolute as they sat, calm and erect, in their saddles. A glance into their fine faces would have assured

you that they were noble and brave, and could be trusted by everybody, from the King to the poorest peasant in the land. Their very horses seemed proud to carry them as they galloped along.

Little Cedric thought there never was anything more beautiful than these knights as they came down the hill on some quest of adventure or errand of mercy.

One day Cedric had been playing with his pet kitten. After a good romp with her, he had thrown himself down on the soft green grass to rest, and the queer little kitten had gone out into the middle of the dusty road and curled herself up for a nice nap.

Suddenly Cedric looked up and saw five knights with all their squires and pages galloping down the road! In a moment more his eye fell upon the kitten lying fast asleep in the middle of the highway. Fearing that the horsemen would not see her, he sprang to his feet, ran quickly forward, and gathered the soft little thing up in his arms just in time to save it from the horses' feet.

As the riders passed, one of the tall knights slackened his horse, and, smiling down upon Cedric, said, "My little fellow, you are almost brave enough to be a knight some day." He then galloped on to join his party, and soon the yellow dust which they had raised from the ground settled down again.

Cedric stood looking after the horsemen until they seemed a mere speck in the distance, and then disappeared altogether. He did not even notice the kitten in his arms when she put her nose up against his cheek.

At last he turned to go into the house, and as he went he said softly to himself, "To be a knight some day!" He ate his simple supper of bread and milk in silence. His mother noticed how quiet he was, but she said nothing; for she knew that in his own good time he would tell her all that was in his heart.

That night as he undressed for bed he looked up at the stars and said in a soft, low tone, "Beautiful stars, do you know what a wonderful thing Sir Rollin said to me to-day? He told me that perhaps some day I might be a

knight!" He could hardly sleep, he was so happy. The great knight had spoken to him, had praised his courage, and, best of all, had said that perhaps some day he, Cedric, might be a great knight himself!

"Could such a thing possibly come to pass?" He asked himself this question over and over again, until at last he fell asleep and dreamed that he was a large, strong man, and wore a shining armor of steel, and rode a splendid black horse, and carried a great sword, and that all the people of the country round about honored and loved him because he was one of the bravest knights in the whole land.

Just as he was dreaming that he was about to rescue a beautiful princess from an ugly giant who had shut her up in a prison, he heard his mother calling him. He opened his eyes and saw that the sky was all pink and gold with the clouds of the sunrise, and that he was only little Cedric in his attic chamber. He dressed himself quickly and climbed down the wooden ladder to the room below.

He was soon busy and happy, helping his

mother feed the doves, and water the cow, and fetch hay for the two horses. After his father had eaten his breakfast and had gone to his work in the field, the little would-be knight and his mother washed the dishes and tidied the two small rooms. Cedric was very fond of thus helping her with the work, and she often said, "My little boy is both son and daughter to me." By and by she sat down to her sewing.

Then Cedric could keep his secret no longer. Going up to her, he put his arm around her neck and whispered to her the story of the knight, how he had stopped and spoken, and what he had said. "Do you think I could ever grow up to be a knight, mother?" asked he.

His mother smiled, and then looked sober as she brushed his brown hair back from his forehead and said, "Knights have many, many hard things to do, my son, and oftentimes their lives are in danger."

"Yes, I know," answered Cedric, eagerly, "but think, mother, how brave they are, and how good! Do they not protect our country?"

“Yes,” said his mother, “I know all that. I could not sleep at night when our enemies are near at hand if I did not know that Sir Rollin Dubois and his brave soldiers were on the hill close by. But you are a very little boy, Cedric. Run out to your play now.”

Many times during the next few weeks little Cedric thought of the grand knights, and how one of them had smiled at him and had spoken as if he, Cedric, might some day be a great, strong knight, and ride a beautiful horse, and do brave deeds.

PART II

Weeks passed by, and the spring had changed into summer. One evening, just as the setting sun was turning all the white clouds into gold and crimson, Cedric stood in the low doorway, wondering if where the angels lived could be more beautiful than was the sky over his dear mountain home. He suddenly heard the tramp of horses' feet, and, looking down across the plain, he saw a gay party of horsemen. Their armor flashed and shone in the

light of the setting sun, and their long white plumes waved in the gentle evening breeze.

Cedric's face lighted up with a glad smile, for he knew that it was Sir Rollin Dubois and his soldiers returning from the terrible war to which the King had sent them. They soon came near enough for Cedric to see their faces, as the heavy steel visors of their helmets were lifted so that they might breathe more freely the soft summer air. It had been a warm day, and Cedric noticed that even the tallest knight among them looked tired, and as if he would be glad to get to the castle and lay aside, for a while at least, his heavy armor.

Just as they were passing the door in which Cedric stood, one of them stopped his horse, and leaning forward said, "My little man, will you give me a drink of water?" Cedric ran quickly and filled a cup with fresh, cool water from the spring near by, and brought it to the knight. "Thank you," said the nobleman, as he handed the cup back to Cedric. "I am very glad to be able to serve you," said Cedric, quietly. The knight smiled, gathered up the

reins of his horse, and said, "You are as courteous as a knight, my boy."

That evening Cedric told his mother of this second speech, and then he asked, as a wistful look came over his face, "Ah, mother dear, do you think I can ever become a knight?"

Weeks passed into months and the soft, gray snow clouds had covered the green hills with the white mantle of winter. Whenever Cedric felt like being rude, or cross, or selfish, he thought of the bright smile on the great knight's face that summer evening when he had asked for the cup of cold water, and he felt sure the smile would change into a frown if the knight should see him do a discourteous or a selfish act.

PART III

A year or two had passed, when one day something happened which Cedric never forgot. His father came in from his work and said, "Sir Rollin Dubois wants a young lad to come to the castle to take the place of his page who has lately been promoted. Do you think,

wife, that our Cedric is strong enough for such an office?"

Cedric's heart almost stopped beating while he listened for his mother's answer. She thought for a few moments, and then said slowly, as if weighing each word, "Yes, I think he would try very hard to do his duty, and I should like to have him learn more of knight-hood. Perhaps some day he too may be a knight, who knows?" she added, as she turned smilingly to the radiant face of her boy.

That very afternoon she made a bundle of his few clothes, and his father took him by the hand, and walked with him up the steep hill to the great castle gate. Cedric had never before been so near the castle, and when his father lifted the heavy iron knocker, and brought it down with two or three loud knocks, it seemed to him that his heart was knocking almost as loudly. Not that he was afraid, but he was stirred by the thought of going into the presence of the great and noble Sir Rollin, whom all people loved and revered.

The huge iron gate slowly lifted. The draw-

bridge was already thrown across the ditch of water which surrounded the castle, and in a few moments Cedric and his father had passed under the stone archway and were standing within the courtyard. A man took them into a large room whose walls and floors were of stone, and bade them sit down on a wooden bench which stood near a door, saying at the same time, "I will tell Sir Rollin that you are here."

They had been waiting some time when a door at the other end of the room opened, and a large, well-built man, who looked so tall and straight that he reminded Cedric of a mountain pine, came forward. He was not dressed in armor, but Cedric knew at once that it was Sir Rollin Dubois. The knight talked a few moments with Cedric's father, and then, turning to Cedric, he said, "And you think you would like to become a knight, my boy? Are you sure that you will not mind hard work, and will remember always to be true and pure, brave and unselfish?"

Cedric's smile was so bright that no answer

was needed. The knight turned again to his father and said, "Do you realize that it will take ten years or more of discipline and hard work on the part of your boy before he can hope to be promoted to a position of responsibility?" "Yes," said the father, quietly, "but I think he is willing to try it."

After a little talk, it was decided that the boy should begin his training then and there. So his father bade him good-by, and left. Cedric was taken by an older boy up some stone stairs to a small room whose ceiling, walls, and floor were of stone. In the corner of the room lay a pile of straw, over which had been thrown a sheepskin. At one side of the room was a small table. No other furniture was in the apartment save a cedar chest, which was doubtless intended to serve for both chair and wardrobe.

There was a narrow, pointed window in one side of the room through which the sunlight came. Cedric went up to the window and looked out, but it was so high that he could see only the blue sky and a soft white cloud.

“Ah,” thought Cedric to himself, “I can at least see the stars at night and the sunlight each morning. Will they not remind me always of the good God who watches over me?”

That night his supper consisted of some coarse barley bread and a bowl of broth. Cedric, however, was used to simple food, and did not mind this part of his discipline. As he lay down upon the pile of straw and drew the sheepskin over him, he thought of his nice warm bed at home; but instantly came this other thought, “I must learn to be hardy and strong if I am ever to do any great work in the world. So I will not mind such little discomforts as these.”

Cedric soon found that he had not only to eat coarse food and sleep on a hard bed, but that he had to practice standing very straight, running very swiftly, and managing a horse; to jump on and off while the horse was in full gallop, to throw his spear with unerring accuracy, and also that he must be prompt and ready to obey a call from Sir Rollin; that he must not only learn to do errands faithfully

and quickly, but to wait patiently and quietly oftentimes when he could not understand why he waited.

PART IV

Year after year passed by, and little Cedric had grown large and tall. When he visited his home he used often to laugh at the little bed which had once held him so cosily. Not only had he grown strong and tall, but he had grown even more in thoughtfulness and courtesy toward all about him.

One day Sir Rollin sent for him. "Cedric," said he, "I wish you to take a message to the King. It is quite an important one, and it must reach him before to-morrow night. Get ready as quickly as you can. Take my gray horse, as he is the swiftest one in the stables, and remember that I have trusted you much by sending you upon this errand."

Cedric's heart beat wild with joy as he thought, "At last I have proved faithful enough to be sent with a message to our great King." He was ready in less than half an

hour, and, jumping on the splendid gray charger, he went galloping down the highway. On and on he rode.

At last he entered a thick forest of pine trees. The road grew very dark and lonesome.

“What if I should meet some wild beast?” thought Cedric; but he added, half aloud, “If I am ever to be a knight, I must learn to be brave, and face every danger.”

It was not long before he was quite sure that he heard a deep, low growl. His heart beat fast, but he rode steadily forward, and soon the growl was repeated, this time nearer and more distinctly; and Cedric saw in the dim light a great wild boar coming toward him.

The creature’s eyes were shining like fire, and his white tusks overhung his lower jaw in a fierce and forbidding fashion. Cedric knew that this must be the beast which had destroyed so many of the cattle of the neighboring peasants, but who was so strong and savage that no one had dared to go near him. He spurred his horse forward as he thought, “If I kill this wild boar, I shall already have be-

gun to be of service to the people of my country." So he lifted the spear which he carried at his side from its leathern socket, and, raising it high in the air, hurled it swiftly at the beast, who was ready to spring upon him.

In a moment more the wild boar rolled over upon the ground dead. Cedric reached down and drew his spear from its side, and as he rode on again he thought, "Wolves and wild boars must not stop the way of a messenger of the King. I must fear nothing if I am to be a knight."

After a time his road lay out of the forest into the sunlight. As he approached a small village he heard a great noise as of much shouting, and soon he saw a group of boys who were evidently hooting and laughing at something among them. He rode up to where they were, and felt himself growing indignant, as he saw an old deformed man standing in their midst, at whom they were jeering.

In a moment he sprang from his horse, and pressing through the crowd of boys he stood beside the old man. On his face was a flush of

indignant anger. "How dare you," he exclaimed, "laugh at or insult an old man like this?" The boys drew back frightened. Although he was really no taller than they, he seemed to tower above them. "My!" exclaimed one of them in a whisper, "doesn't he look like a knight as he stands there?" "I shouldn't wonder if he were one," said another.

Cedric turned to the old man, who was trembling in every limb. "Where are you going?" asked he kindly. "Only to the next village," said the old man, "but these boys stopped me on my way. I cannot help my deformity nor my old age. I wish I could." The tears stood in his eyes as he spoke. "Come," said Cedric, gently, "let me help you upon my horse. I, too, am going to the next village."

When they had reached the next village, Cedric helped the old man from the horse at his own door. Then, mounting, he thought to himself, "I am very hungry; I think I will stop at the village inn and get a good warm supper. No," said he, on second thought, "I cannot stop

now. I have had to travel so slowly because of the old man that I must make up for lost time." With that he tightened the rein of his beautiful horse, and the two had soon left the village far in the distance. Cedric reached back to a leather pouch behind him and took from it a dry biscuit, which had to serve for his supper that night.

Late in the evening he reached the house at which he was to rest his horse, and he himself slept for a few hours. By dawn the next day he was up and off on his journey. As he was riding by a small stream of water he noticed a poor little fish that some thoughtless fisherman had thrown upon the bank as too insignificant to be taken home for breakfast. The tiny creature was struggling and gasping for breath as it vainly tried to get back into the water. "Ah! you poor little thing," thought Cedric, "I wish I had time to put you back into the stream, but I haven't!" and so he rode on.

Then came the thought, "A knight would take time to help anything that was suffering. If ever I am to be a knight, I must do so, too."



SIR GALAHAD

With this thought he turned, and was soon back again at the spot where the little fish lay. He got down off of his horse, and, taking the poor creature in his hand as gently as possible, he stooped down and put it into the stream of water. It swam rapidly away as if glad, beyond words, to get back into its own element. Its swiftly moving tail seemed to Cedric, as he watched it for a moment, to say, "Thank you, Cedric, thank you, thank you!" He then jumped on his horse again and rode on.

The day grew very warm, but Cedric knew that he must not stop for his own comfort; his errand was an important one, and he must reach the King's palace before night.

PART V

At last the beautiful palace came in sight, and in a few moments Cedric had ridden into the courtyard. He gave his letter to a servant to carry to one of the squires, who gave it to a courtier, who presented it to the King; for, you must remember, in those days a king was a

very great person, and only those men who had risen high in rank could approach him.

Among other things, the note contained this message: it told the King that the bearer was a young lad who had been in training for knight-hood; that Sir Rollin had found him always brave and trustworthy, true and noble, kind and courteous; and that he, Sir Rollin, thought if the King wanted him in his army, he would find him worthy of the place.

The King sent for Cedric to come to him personally. Our little boy had grown into a tall youth, you know, and his frank, pure face was good to look upon. The King told him that he wished to put him in office in his army; and thus Cedric went to live in the King's household, and here he learned many things which he could not have learned at the castle of Sir Rollin Dubois.

Several years passed by, and Cedric had been intrusted with many enterprises both difficult and dangerous. At last, one day, the King sent for him to come into the throne room. There sat the King upon a beautiful

throne of gold; beside him sat the Queen. Standing about the room was a great number of courtiers and grand ladies. As Cedric entered the room, the King said, "Come forward!"

Cedric stepped forward and kneeled upon one knee before the throne, as was the custom in those days. The King raised his beautiful golden scepter and struck Cedric lightly upon the shoulder with it, saying, at the same time, "Rise, Sir Cedric of Altholstane." And Cedric knew that he was at last a knight!

In time he had a beautiful castle of his own, and splendid armor, and a beautiful black horse. The handsome horse used to prance and toss his head proudly in the air, as if he knew what a noble young knight he was carrying. After a while Cedric had a lovely wife and three sweet little children of his own; and, as he rode abroad over the country, many a time the peasants, standing in their cottage doors, would say to one another, "There goes the brave Sir Cedric of Altholstane. God bless him! May he live long to help protect our country!" And all the people loved him.

OTHER STORIES

NO TIME LIKE THE PRESENT

If you're told to do a thing,
And mean to do it really,
Never let it be by halves;
Do it fully, freely.

Do not make a poor excuse,
Waiting, weak, unsteady;
All obedience worth the name
Must be prompt and ready.

If you're told to learn a task,
And you should begin it,
Do not tell your teacher, "Yes,
I'm coming in a minute."

Waste not moments nor your words
In telling what you could do
Some other time; the present is
For doing what you should do.

Don't do right unwillingly,
And stop to plan and measure;
'Tis working with the heart and soul
That makes our duty pleasure.

—*Phæbe Cary.*

THE LITTLE NURSE

When the celebrated philanthropist Florence Nightingale was a little girl, and living in Derbyshire, England, everybody was struck with her thoughtfulness for people and animals. She even made friends with the shy squirrels. When persons were ill, she would help nurse them, saving nice things from her own meals for them.

There lived near the village an old shepherd named Roger, who had a favorite sheep-dog named Cap. This dog was the old man's only companion, and helped in looking after the flock by day and kept him company at night. Cap was a very sensible dog, and kept the sheep in such good order that he saved his master a deal of trouble.

One day, Florence was riding out with a friend, and saw the shepherd giving the sheep their night feed; but Cap was not there and the sheep knew it, for they were scampering about in all directions. Florence and her friend stopped to ask Roger why he was so sad, and what had become of his dog.

"Oh," he replied, "Cap will never be of any more use to me. I'll have to hang him, poor fellow, as soon as I get home to-night."

"Hang him!" said Florence. "O, Roger, how wicked of you! What has poor old Cap done?"

"He has done nothing," replied Roger; "but he will never be of any more use to me, and I cannot

afford to keep him. One of the mischievous school-boys threw a stone at him yesterday, and broke one of his legs." And the old shepherd wiped away the tears which filled his eyes. "Poor Cap," he said, "he was as knowing as a human being."

"But are you sure his leg is broken?" asked Florence.

"O, yes, Miss, it is broken, sure enough; he has not put his foot on the ground since."

Then Florence and her friend rode on.

"We will go and see poor Cap," said the gentleman. "I don't believe the leg is really broken. It would take a big stone and a blow to break the leg of a great dog like Cap."

"Oh; if you could but cure him, how glad Roger would be!" exclaimed Florence.

When they got in the cottage, the poor dog lay there on the bare brick floor; his hair disheveled and his eyes sparkling with anger at the intruders. But, when the little girl called him "poor Cap," he grew pacified, and began to wag his tail. Then he crept from under the table, and lay at her feet. She took hold of one of his paws, patted his rough head, and talked to him while the gentleman examined the injured leg. It was badly swollen, and hurt him very much to have it examined; but the dog knew it was meant kindly, and, though he moaned and winced with pain, he licked the hands that were hurting him.

“It’s a bad bruise. No bones are broken,” said the gentleman. “Rest is all Cap needs; he will soon be well again.”

“I am so glad,” exclaimed Florence. “But can we do nothing for him? He seems in such pain.”

“Plenty of hot water to foment the part, would both ease and help to cure him.”

Florence lighted the fire, tore up an old flannel petticoat into strips, which she wrung out in hot water, and laid on the poor dog’s bruise. It was not long before he began to feel the benefit of the application, and to show his gratitude in looks and wagging his tail. On their way home, they met the old shepherd coming slowly along with a piece of rope in his hands.

“Oh, Roger!” cried Florence, “you are not to hang poor old Cap. We have found that his leg is not broken at all.”

“No, he will serve you yet,” said the gentleman.

“Well, I am most glad to hear it,” said the old man; “and many thanks to you for going to see him.”

The next morning Florence was up early to bathe Cap. On visiting the dog, she found the swelling much gone down. She bathed it again, and Cap was as grateful as before.

Two or three days later, when Florence and her friend were riding together, they came up to Roger and his sheep. Cap was there, too, watching the

sheep. When he heard the voice of the little girl, his tail wagged and his eyes sparkled.

“Do look at the dog, Miss,” said the shepherd, “he’s so pleased to hear your voice. But for you, I would have hanged the best dog I ever had in my life.”

KINDNESS TO ANIMALS

Turn, turn the hasty foot aside,
Nor crush the helpless worm;
The frame thy wayward looks deride
Required a God to form.

The common Lord of all that move,
From whom thy being flowed,
A portion of His boundless love
On that poor worm bestowed.

The sun, the moon, the stars, He made
To all His creatures free;
And spread o’er earth the grassy blade
For worms, as well as thee.

Let them enjoy their day,
Their lowly bliss receive;
Oh! do not lightly take away
The life thou can’st not give.

—*Gisborne.*

THE PRICE OF A WHISTLE

When I was a child of seven years of age, my friends on a holiday filled my pockets with cop-

pers. I went directly to a shop where they sold toys for children; and, being charmed with the sound of a whistle, that I met by the way in the hands of another boy, I voluntarily offered him all my money for one. I then came home, and went whistling all over the house, much pleased with my whistle, but disturbing the whole family. My brothers, and sisters, and cousins understanding the bargain I had made, told me I had given four times as much for it as it was worth. This put me in mind what good times I might have bought with the rest of the money; and they laughed at me so much for my folly, that I cried with vexation, and the reflection gave me more chagrin than the whistle gave me pleasure.

This, however, was afterwards of use to me; so that often, when I was tempted to buy some unnecessary thing, I said to myself, "Don't give too much for the whistle;" and so I saved my money.

As I grew up, came into the world, and observed the actions of men, I thought I met with many, very many, who gave too much for the whistle.

When I saw anyone too ambitious of court favors, sacrificing his time, his repose, his liberty, his virtue; and perhaps his friends, to attain them, I have said to myself, "This man gives too much for his whistle."

When I saw another fond of popularity, constantly employing himself in political bustles, neglecting his own affairs, and ruining them by

that neglect; "He pays, indeed," said I, "too much for his whistle."

If I knew a miser, who gave up every kind of comfortable living, all the pleasures of doing good to others, all the esteem of his fellow-citizens and the joys of benevolent friendship, for the sake of accumulating wealth, "Poor man," I would say, "you do, indeed, pay too much for your whistle."

When I meet a man of pleasure, sacrificing every laudable improvement of the mind, or of his fortune, to mere corporeal sensations, I say, "Mistaken man, you are providing pain for yourself instead of pleasure; you give too much for your whistle."

If I see one fond of fine clothes, fine furniture, fine equipages, all above his fortune, for which he contracts debts, and ends his career in prison, "Alas," I say, "he has paid dear, very dear, for his whistle."

In short I conceived that great part of the miseries of mankind were brought upon them by the false estimates they have made of the value of things, and by their giving too much for their whistles.

JAMES WATT

About one hundred and fifty years ago, a little boy who lived in Scotland, and whose name was James Watt, sat one day looking at a kettle of

boiling water, and holding a spoon before the steam that rushed out of the spout. His aunt thought he was idle, and said, "Is it not a shame for you to waste your time so?" But James was not idle; he was thinking of the power of steam.

James grew to be a good and a great man, and made those wonderful improvements in the steam-engine which have made it so useful in our day.

What can the steam-engine not do? It does more things than I can think of. If it could speak, it might say,—

"I blow the bellows, I forge the steel,
I manage the mill and the mint;
I hammer the ore and turn the wheel,
And the news that you read I print."

And from so small a beginning as the steam of a tea-kettle came the steam-engine, which drives the steam-boat across the great ocean and by means of which the trains are moved with such speed upon our railroads.

BEAUTIFUL THINGS

Beautiful faces are those that wear—
It matters little if dark or fair—
Whole-souled honesty printed there.

Beautiful eyes are those that show,
Like crystal panes where hearth-fires glow,
Beautiful thoughts that burn below.

Beautiful lips are those whose words
Leap from the heart like songs of birds,
Yet whose utterance prudence girds.

Beautiful hands are those that do
Work that is earnest, and brave, and true,
Moment by moment, the long day through.

Beautiful feet are those that go
On kindly ministries to and fro—
Down lowliest ways, if God wills it so.

Beautiful shoulders are those that bear
Ceaseless burdens of homely care
With patient grace and daily prayer.

Beautiful lives are those that bless;
Silent rivers of happiness,
Whose hidden fountains but few can guess.

—*The Day-Spring.*

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